



Answered Prayers and Willard Preachers
Adam Fieled

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Nefertiti

To the blonde, cigarette dangling from
red lips in the blue Chevette— in a past life
I courted you in Egypt, we danced, your
neck like Nefertiti's as furiously we made
love— lived together, also, in Pompeii, & your
volcanic thighs took me sky-high. Now, here
you are again, pale cool flat diamond
eyed, I am ravishing you, we never think
of New Jersey, murder, mortuaries, what's
ugly, fleeting, as the light goes green it
is all in the set-ness of your face forever—
frissons, fireworks in someone's mind.

September 1996, College Avenue, State College

Basement: Philadelphia Museum of Art: Summer 1996
for Ernestine Rubin

Art, it would seem, is a nice way of
saying that everything resides in hell—
the pictures are anguish— the negatives,
hiding somewhere, ecstasy.

Pictures mounted on plain grey walls.
Slow viewers puzzle themselves; sashay,
bug-like, into corners. I am not,
unfortunately, basking in the open glow of
abundant creativity, but am thrashed
by a sense of impotence. How do I
let the images in? The blonde over
there: does she do penance by giving
head? Fractions, pinpoint of light distill
from a low ceiling— footsteps, cacophony
of breaths being drawn. Eyes of an
artist, mine of a bloodhound. Staid types sniff the walls.

Art, it would seem, is
a nice way of saying that everyone
resides in hell— the people are anguish—
the angels, hiding somewhere, ecstasy.

July 1996, Arden Road, Gulph Mills

Room 510, Atherton Hilton

Lightning illuminates the pale sky; rain
on the leaves sounds like waves. Snakes
rattle across the Earth, hold themselves
erect under the onslaught. Your body,
Jennifer— lax against a pillow, aghast
at the finality of clouds. Lampshades
are tan mushrooms— wallets stuffed
with obscure currencies. Some stray
Ruth may (later) come to wound me.
Swim for your life, junk-in-the-veins
Narcissus— Rimbaud is just a button
to push, guided by voices or not. Our
face of passion is one we had before we were born.

July 1996, Atherton Hilton, State College

Revelation from Holmes Hall

I escaped a father I hated, broke
from Moses, his Commandments,
shunned synagogue machinery,
slipped past esoteric Torah, hid
in recesses of a flat white satin
wall (Jennifer, her loins), dreamed
our future for the Universe—

I fathered a Bible-less expanse, yellow
leaves fell, rain coated, I dawdled,
fumbled, waited for lightning or roses,
circles drew me down to implore these
roots: Buddha, Yahweh, Adonai,
Christ, Mohammed, the escaped father

lives, impersonal, diurnal, this
the refuse of his wisdom I partake
of, dreaming no future for myself
past what modes of suffering are
encompassed outside a third-story
window on a night when Jennifer
rounds the Universe off to a third, out—

October 1996, North Halls, State College

To Baudelaire

Mama's boy! Compassionate,
ridiculous, dandified cunt!
Right minded, wrongheaded,
unwed slave and parasite!
No poets go to Hell— God
be with you, vulgar and
adorable prick! May your
tarted up, ice-pick nose-pick tales
grow into a grin in the ether!

You immortal artist you—
we remember, who have
been in New Jersey at midnight,
no girls, nothing to do,
sitting through thunders, hurricanes,
what it is to be bored, “to ennui”—
to sling a black coat over our
shoulders, stroll streets in paroxysms,
then into ecstasy, devilish slumbers,
out again into the ocean— we remember thee.

October 1996, North Halls, State College

A Dream

The night, as I recall it,
was moonless. An
ambiance of demonic
enchantment hung
heavy over grey
concrete parking lot.
It was a carnival of
dead souls, ghost-wedding,
vampire funeral. No
rides, cotton candy,
starlit skies, carousels,
only shades of sniffing
bloodhounds, consumptive
spaces, conglomerations;
strange animal glamour
of spilled blood. Deep
implications of hell, chills.
I awoke: thunder crackled
over the trunks of trees.

July 1996, Arden Road, Gulph Mills

Fire

Out of void nothingness, a woman
arose before me with incandescent
ivory skin; she said, "I will be yours,
worship you, make you incisive with
the vast, monstrous power of my
body; you will worship me, we shall
die together evening by evening." I
embraced her silence, did not kill it
following, kissed her, we died together
then. She lifted her body, stood by the
window in the white/blue room, night
blackened against us. She said, "I
have encompassed you, scribed you,
you will never find me in you again."
I pleaded her, fell upon her with kisses,
caresses, all in vain. Her name was
Fire, she told me, left me, never again
appeared. I sit, write, pierce what flames
still leap out of void nothingness— she
ornaments the darkness somewhere, burning.

October 1996, North Halls, State College

De Profundis

The only reason I'm writing this is because I have no fucking choice. I don't usually use expletives, but in this situation one is appropriate. It's early April and the clocks have sprung forward; it's almost eight and still reasonably light. I was outside a minute ago, but now I'm in this library sitting next to a brick wall that I wish were a window. I could move, I could find another seat, but I won't because I'm a masochist and that's how God made me. I believe in God and always have. I don't know if I like Him or Her or It.

I'm just counting the minutes until I can sleep again. I do not know what is motivating me to write. Eight tolls of the bell. I am not dead yet and I don't know if I'm alive; something in me lives but only because I wish it to. I want to be held and I don't want to be fatalistic. I want to kiss and be reinfused with faith. I want to have fun, enough so that when life gets lonely again I can spitefully tell myself *You had your fun*. It's a habit I have, spitefully saying things to myself. I constantly wonder if I suffer too much or not enough. I am dominated by suffering but not time. Time is my clay. I am determined to fashion a life of meaning, painful meaning, from it.

I could sit here all night. If I sit here long enough, I could break through the layers of my surface unrest to find the white round pearl of my suffering knotting my throat. I may do so; I may not. A face, now a voice, passes through my mind, and I am startled. No! Not her. I don't know her. I wish many things. Wishes hurt. They are not fun. Santa is a sadist. Do not tell him what you wish for; he doesn't want to hear it. I don't put much stock in holidays anyway. Nothing changes. Nothing is changing now, too; it must be a holiday. I declare this to be Inertia Day 1995. We will all celebrate by complaining of our directionless lives. Hallmark will bring out a line of cards; blank cards. Of course, no mail will be delivered.

Enough of that; I've carried the joke far enough. I'm sorry; I was just trying to stay amused. I find that my amusement always seems to end much too fast. I'm dejected. There's nothing for me here or at home. I need a lover and I am 19, supposedly the peak of my sexual capabilities. There is a female on this campus who makes my heart stop dead. DEAD! Strips me bare. BARE! I think about her so fervently that I must use my hands as pacifiers. I'm frightened of her, and vice versa. Circumstances are not extenuating. I've felt this for months, and nothing has changed, and may continue not to. She has shortly cropped blonde hair. How I'd love to run a single hand through it. She sounds like Joan Crawford. She makes me think inarticulate thoughts. I want to baby her. It would probably be advisable to meet her before I try.

What do I do about this? Give me an opportunity, God. My dignity as artist and man is diminishing with each whispered lamentation. My thoughts are not grandiose: a flaxen head, a spill of blood, imagined moans. God, you sent me this plague. I demand an explanation. If I am too young to make this manifest, what does it portend? Madness? More loneliness? This could conceivably go on forever. I'm not going to jump from a window. I live in a room that has a screen preventing me from doing so. I am not sitting near a window now; I'm sitting next to a brick wall. I'm going to have to live my life tomorrow, too, and the day after. Why are eons encapsulated in a single cold April night? No birds are singing and she is not here. Help me understand, God; why don't I see myself in trees, flowers, grass; why don't these things reflect me? They are like airplanes or factories, just points in the visual landscape. Nature kindles no joy in me. Nature is cruel and very unusual. I

am disgusted with my own discipline that binds me to this pen and keeps me from relaxing.

I have not relaxed today. I fear I've lost the talent. I used to be prodigious, then decided to be an artist. Art is *something*, nothing else. That's all: no presuppositions, no posturing. I do know that if we saw ourselves adequately reflected by nature, we wouldn't need art. Nature is crude and unlovely. A branch does not amuse, a leaf does not stimulate desire: we do. We are dedicated followers of no one. I call myself Artist because it has more letters than Adam. Besides, am I Adam? Nothing springs from my ribs but disillusionment. I don't mean to be cutely cynical. Lots of people are into cute cynicism. Cynicism looks cute because it is babyish, it never grows. Now I'm going to direct my energies into the active elimination of the memory of having created an aphoristic phrase. I feel better already. I feel almost worthy to be loved. The lousy haircut I got today doesn't bother me anymore because I know that appearances are a ruse. Are bullets and beer forms of wisdom?

These are painful days, and I do not concede my right to complain. Creative self-pity is the basis of Art. I love nothing more than my pity for myself. Nine tolls of the bell. It's probably completely dark outside now. Me and my brick wall are sticking together. We have a healthy relationship. We are not mutually interdependent. We have adopted a non-violent approach to our relative closeness. I'm too young for all of this. I should be doing what young people do. This desk: a pirate ship! This wall: a much coveted treasure! My loneliness: grosser than Hamlet's!

I wouldn't deny myself the boastful privilege of saying I try to know how to listen, what to listen for. Everybody thinks Art is supposed to be graceful. Everything lovely is jagged and sharp. Grace is a myth. *Content* cannot be graceful. Who leads a graceful life? The ones who slide by on surfaces, seemingly unscathed? I mean, I always want to assume that all great artists are moralists, but obviously that's a false assumption. God, this is getting vague. I've got to go on. If I'm too young to love, I'm also too young to stop. It's demoralizing to think about the time when stopping starts. The fantasy I'm having is of her reading this and being so overwhelmed by my caustic wit and biting satire that she takes off her clothes. Even the suggestion is painful. In fact, everything is painful. Does anyone remember what being young is like? The fear, the continual fear, hanging on every moment, every breath? Does urgency fade with age?

I have created tonight and I am creating right now. I will continue to do so, even though I don't know where I'm going. I'm trying to listen for the next impulse and it will come. I'm allowed to reject it if I want because another will follow. The most inspiring thing for an Artist is that *there's always something more to be afraid of*. I will not repeat myself unless I feel the need to do so. I do not feel the need to do so. I swallow.

April 1995, Pattee Library, State College

Dada Circus

(A man in black ambles slowly and deliberately onstage, possibly bearing roses. He seats himself in a chair at a table stage left. His name is James Douglas.)

J: Everything's a fight these days. We've got to fight evil! Fight racism! Free the Tibetan monks! Help the Bosnians with money, blood, sweat and tears! I see kids walking around today wearing army jackets from some thrift-store, and you know it doesn't mean a thing to them. The kids aren't fighting; it's the Baby Boomers, that's who's at the heart of our modern malaise! They know damn well that they had it better than any generation in American history— no world wars and no AIDS. I, personally, identify with these kids today. But then, I'm young at heart. (violent knock at the door) Probably someone soliciting for some goddamned Mothers Against Drunk Driving— (James opens the door to find three men in nothing but boxer shorts— Elmer, Homer, and Omar)

E: Are you James Douglas?

J: Are you a homosexual?

E: No sir— we are Elmer!

H: Homer!

O: And Omar!

E, H, O: (in unison) We're a pseudo-quasi-ersatz-alterna-white-funk-Chili Pepper rip off band!

J: Chili Pepper wha...?

E: Could you please let us in, sir? We're freezing.

J: Why the hell should I let you hoodlums into my humble abode?

E: Did you not hear us? We are Elmer!

H: Homer!

J: Alright, alright, come in. (they enter) Now what the hell are you doing here? I ain't givin' any money to no charity!

E: We're from the Society for the Humane Treatment of Overused Undergarments, and if you don't clothe us, we'll have to shampoo you (holding up Pert-Plus bottle).

O: Have you ever witnessed an Oriental Shampoo attack? It isn't pleasant.

(E, H, O form a circle around James, shampoo their hands)

J: (nervously) Do you boys like paintings? I could give you one in lieu of clothes— I'm an artist too!

H: Really?

O: Far out? We can't shampoo this guy! (the circle disperses)

J: Alright, now get the hell outta here.

E: We're naked and it's freezing— have you no compassion?

J: No! I ain't got no come, and I ain't got no passion! (grabbing them) Now git! (slams shut the door) Y' know, they say what doesn't kill you makes you stronger. They'll find clothes, and they'll be stronger for having suffered. Just between you and me, I know this is some artsy-fartsy play. I know you're watching me, and I don't like it. It's Orwellian. What do you want me to do, jumping jacks? (starts doing jumping jacks) Now this is character development! This is transformation! I am in the moment! I am playing the lines! I am playing the lines! (he stops) Alright, now I'll sit here and wait. (violent knock at door). Probably another naked rock band...

(James opens the door to find a man in a Richard Nixon Halloween mask. We'll call him Dick.)

D: Trick or treat?

J: Is it Halloween?

D: No! It's the 24th anniversary of the first day of Watergate hearings! Long live Tricky Dick!

J: Now here's a real man! Alright, Dick, you can come in on one condition— you have to leave your mask on. Here, have a seat. (Dick sits) So, I was telling the audience earlier that the Baby Boomer generation is the source of our modern malaise— wouldn't you agree?

D: Let me contact Nixon for an answer.

J: You can communicate with him?

D: Yes, but it's funny— he doesn't want to talk about politics. After Nixon died he went into therapy— it's done wonders for his self-esteem. He and Pat are even making love again.

J: Without bodies?

D: No; apparently they've taken to possessing Bill and Hillary in their intimate moments.

J: I thought Hillary Clinton was frigid?

D: She is. Hillary is a prostitute working the red-light district of Washington.

J: Is she attractive?

D: Richard says she looks like Nancy Reagan, but thinner.

J: Can I ask you a personal question?

D: What?

J: Do you have any allegorical significance?

D: No, I'm a cipher.

J: Sorry to hear it.

D: The pay's good and I'm going to write a posthumous memoir.

J: Will it sell?

D: Richard's BIG in purgatory.

J: So the Catholics are right?

D: No- in heaven that's what they call New Jersey.

(Knock on door—James answers—Attractive middle-aged Anne Bancroft type)

J: Who're you? You better not try to sell me something!

C: I'm Claire Avon and I'm sleeping with your son!

J: Well then you better come right in and tell me all the juicy parts!

D: Ha! Ha! Ha! It's just like "The Graduate"! Richard loves that one! "Here's to you, Mrs. Robinson, Jesus loves you..."

J: (cutting him off) That's enough, Dick. Have a seat, Claire.

C: There are no chairs.

J: I didn't say have a chair, Claire!

C: (seating herself on the floor) Your son is ruining my life!

D: Wait...I feel Richard coming...yes! He wants to say...Claire...your...you can't say that, sir, you're a President!

C: (approaching Dick) You can communicate with spirits?

D: Just Richard Nixon. Why do you think I'm so happy all the time?

J: Alright, Claire, obviously you want me to help you, and you're certainly well made up. In fact, I'm not sure where the makeup stops and you start.

C: Your son is mad—he's always kicking and punching and screaming and yelling!

J: Then why don't you have any bruises?

C: He doesn't hurt me—he just punches and kicks aimlessly, and in public places too. It's embarrassing!

D: So why don't you leave him, and then you can...Mr. President!

C: I can't leave Andre...he's the most considerate lover I've ever had!

(At this point, the action freezes. Elmer appears onstage again, still clad in boxers. He snaps his fingers and Claire, James, and Dick collapse. Elmer sits center stage, Indian style.)

E: That scene was going downhill fast, and now here I am because the playwright wants to jar you. (Rising, bellowing) My friends are dead! The band is over! No more cocaine! No more groupies! No more amps that go to 11 and MTV Music Awards with Courtney Love! (he snaps his fingers)

(C, J, D rise to their former positions)

J: (advancing to Claire) Well, why don't you just...

(Elmer snaps— C, D, J collapse)

E: I wonder if I could get these idiots to sing the Doors. (Addressing them) When I snap my fingers, you will all become Jim Morrison simultaneously. (He snaps his fingers)

(J, C, D rise, link arms, line dance, singing "Come on baby light my fire" twice—the third time, Elmer snaps his fingers and they collapse again.)

E: It seems I have complete control over these people onstage—but how much control do I have over you? I want you all to laugh at me. Do it!...Do it! It's just a game, right? I don't care what you do. It's every man for himself, cause this is war! Everything's a fight these days, isn't it? We've got to fight evil! Fight racism! Free the Tibetan monks!

(James rises indignantly)

J: Now wait a minute, boy— those are my lines!

E: You're the only one allowed to fight evil?

J: Wake Richard Nixon up, too.

E: Richard Nixon can't wake up. That's what being Richard Nixon means!

J: (attacking him) Why you little...

(Action freezes. Homer and Omar appear onstage, normally dressed. They snap their fingers and James and Elmer collapse.)

H: When we die, the play's over.

O: Pretty existential, isn't it?

H: Not if you look at it metaphysically.

O: Which means?

H: We're actors playing a scene. "Actor" is just a personalization of action, and everyone is performing an action at all times.

O: Even Richard Nixon?

H: No— we're talking about the living.

O: What about a Republican like George Bush?

H: Again, no— we're talking about the living.

O: So what action is George Bush performing at all times?

H: Masturbation.

O: But aren't the dead, just by not living, performing a sort of negative action?

H: Ask Keith Richards.

O: We sound like we're in a Tom Stoppard play.

H: No, not a Tom Stoppard play, THE Tom Stoppard play.

O: He's only written one?

H: Yes— the rest he just sort of threw up.

O: That's an action.

H: Isn't Tom Stoppard not an actor?

O: That's true.

H: Affirmation— twenty-love!

O: What?

H: You called?

O: Huh?

H: We're playing the question game.

O: Explanation— twenty-all!

(Elmer rises, screams, charges between Homer and Omar)

E: Plagiarizing! You're plagiarizing!

H: It's in the script. (he pulls out a copy) Have a look.

E: It's a sham! It's a travesty of a mockery of a mockery of a sham!

O: That's plagiarized too.

E: At least he's honest.

O: Me?

E: No, the playwright.

H: Oh— him.

O: Are we honest?

E: Who knows? There's no plot in this piece and no character development. It's DADA— we're not really anything.

H: That's the playwright talking.

E: I didn't write the play.

O: No one does.

H: How Zen.

E: Shall we meditate?

(Homer, Elmer, Omar line up at front of stage, close their eyes, assume lotus position. Dick rises.)

D: You have no idea how uncomfortable it is in this mask. I don't know why I accepted this role—I'm not even getting paid. I've spent half of this thing on my back, the other half singing "Light My Fire" and pretending to be a Republican psychic. I have some news for you, folks—there are no Republican psychics.

(Claire rises)

C: And I get to be the Avon lady—real fuckin' funny! I've had the stupidest lines in the whole script!

D: That "considerate lover" bit?

C: I cringed in rehearsal every time I read it. I asked them to edit it out.

D: Are you fucking a teenager?

C: I am a fucking teenager!

(James rises)

J: Why are we all just standing around? This is a play, isn't it? Whoever heard of a play where nothing happens?

C: Well, look, they're meditating.

J: Is that really an action?

D: We talked about this before, didn't we?

C: Someone did.

(J, D, C snap their fingers—E, H, O rise—E, H, O snap their fingers—J, D, C collapse)

E: Do you get the feeling we're not alone here?

H: And why do we keep snapping our fingers?

O: Remember—the other three.

E: Oh, the other three— of course.

H: We're stagnating, guys.

O: I bet they're getting tired of the whole "stand up, collapse" bit.

E: Now wait a minute! Obviously we're here for a reason— they'll be patient—
(scanning audience) won't you?

H: Dammit, I've got something in my boot!

O: Does it hurt?

H: He wants to know if it hurts...

(Elmer snaps his fingers—H, O collapse)

E: I know in the script I'm supposed to commit suicide now. Just because this started as a comedy, you thought it would end one? Here's a secret for you, folks— change is absolute. Change is the only Absolute in the Universe! This is LIVING THEATER— it doesn't create a fantasy world for you to lose yourself in— it confronts you with life! Sure it's pretentious, but it's better than some sitcom, right? Isn't art supposed to grab you by the balls? By the neck (screaming) By the throat? (Elmer clutches his neck, choking, collapsing)

END PLAY

September 1998, Arts Building, State College

Mortuary Puppies

(Three men and three women in black robes sit in a semi-circle; a candle sits before them, and a box of bibles. Inverted pentagrams are drawn on their foreheads, and their faces are powdered stark white, black lips. Call them A, B, C, D, E, F)

A: (tearing off his robe to reveal black jeans and tee-shirt) I have no supernatural insight! I can't cast a spell!

B: (pinching his stomach) I'm fat! I eat too much!

C: (rising, miming an Indian rain-dance) You guys take yourselves too seriously. I can't blame you. We're desperate for a leader. (pulling his hood over his head) We're living slumberously. We'd rather surf the Net than the ocean. We'd rather rent movies than make them. Lust is the only thing you can rely on. (crumbling into a heap on the floor, writhing)

D: (approaching C, comforting him with an embrace) Sex dominates our lives, but we don't want to admit it. (she peels hood off C's head and kisses him passionately)

E: (picking up a copy of Playboy from beneath the candle, lighting a page on fire) Look at this shit. Exploitation is rampant.

B: (pointing accusingly at E) You're desperate! You're an accident waiting to happen! (he shrinks away from E, pointing a cross at him)

E: (chasing B around in a circle) Hatred is the spice of life! Your subtle sensibilities are corrupt with bullshit!

F: (coming downstage left, lying flat on ground) Every man harbors a secret desire to be Superman.

D: (rising, tearing off robe to reveal glamorous dress, breaking into a supermodel strut) I am revolver! I am bomb! I am grenade! I can hurt!

E: (walking aimless circles) Like idlers at the funeral of a psychiatrist. (collapsing onto his knees in prayer) Like a pitchfork stuck into eternity's stomach.

F: (frantically doing sit-ups) This was the determinist exercise, intellectualized, spectacle-juiced.

C: (catching D in a full-nelson) This was detrimental planets of chanting, word-place unstymied, climaxed with whoredom!

D: (breaking away from C, spitting on him) This was the court of maybe adjourned, wrestled with casual moaning blizzards!

A: (doing Michael Jackson "moon-walk" downstage) God cooperates with Truth and Justice.

God is millions of uptight people fucking themselves!

B: (taking off his shoes, beating himself in the head with them) God is implements of destruction stewing in vats!

C: (finding a razor, preparing to slit his wrists) God is a spider piercing heaven with venom and menace!

A: (knocking razor out of C's hand) Fuck death! Death is the refuse of flies! (the rest of the group forms a semi-circle around him, begins falling at his feet and feeling him up sensually, lust in their eyes) Death is the pulse of underwater nowhere! (the group begins to sex-pant) Death is the thin arm of ridiculous waving! (the group begins to climax violently) You're all a bunch of babbling crabs! (he breaks from them and they whimper) Let us ride. Let us worship a lesbian gopher. Let us spit our vehemence. (he takes out a copy of the Bible from under the candle; in it are five copies of the poem "bible"; he distributes them; the rest of the group forms a line at the front of the stage and recites this poem)

B, C, D, E, F: bible is stilts for mind-midgets,
brassy as a Barnum poster, three-ringed
bible is black and white silent film
with Valentino Christ presiding
bible holds governments in thrall, muzzles
president's mouth, defecates on judges heads
bible is Godfather ordering a kill,
hovering outside abortion clinic w/ gun
bible is Pat Buchanan riding GOP elephant
towards Bethlehem, stampeding over gays
bible is 700 Club demanding money, bogus
tears in their eyes, TV Jehovahs
bible is King Silence faced w modern ambiguity,
cancerous sewing rage in frail hearts
bible's enemy is artistry,
prophets of longing howling w compassion
bible is fire blowing anger
bible is exclusivity spilling its heinous seed
bible is shelled turtle
bible is vomit of fear
bible is a lie, an ivory toilet;
to shit in it you have to flush yourself

(During the poem, A has been tearing pages from his bible, chewing them and spitting them out. When the poem ends, he tosses the bible into the audience)

A: (approaching the other five, he tips the first in line and they fall, domino style) Somehow I found myself spending time with teenagers in coffee joints. I happened to lose my bearings and had no better place to go.

B, C, D, E, F: (from the floor, doing the wave, in unison) God is a cornball with a draggy scheme!

A: I fucked one of them but I...(weeping) couldn't come!

B, C, D, E, F: (unison, pointing at him accusingly) Sometimes impotence knows best!

A: (regaining his composure, lighting a cigarette suavely) Terrible, how our needy flesh imagines satisfaction in external monuments.

B: (rising, kneeling before A) Shut your eyes and listen— the thread of children's voices will hold our hearts in place, cozy as a hammer's nail or tire tracks on blacktop roads.

C: (rising, kneeling before B) I haven't seen my father in seven years! He jerked off in front of me and brought home porn!

D: (rising, kneeling before C) Precious bulbs bloom from horde together beg!

E: (rising, stripping off his robe in disgust) You guys are fucking ridiculous. Why do you have to make a production out of everything?

F: (rising, facing audience) Emancipate my claustrophobia! Respect my wedding dress! Ponder my teabags! Sleep! (she spits into the audience)

A: (taking F by the neck in a vice-grip) Do you belong to a food group?

F: (fighting A off, wailing) Sleep on sea-sunk nail-beds! Sleep in tart plum wine!

B: (saluting) The President's power is measured in inches! Stars and stripes become a big boner! The bald eagle a flying come-shot! When the President comes, the earth quakes! The President is scrotum-potent!

A: (letting go of F, attacking B) Your head is fuzzy with pussy-dreams!

B: (fighting him off) Saddam Hussein our leather dominatrix! Bush has discovered the joys of jello! Our head of state has a seventh-grade heart!

A: (letting go of B, lighting another cigarette) Butt. Universal emblem of frailty.

D: (approaching him sexily) You should put me in your mouth. I come lit. I don't produce noxious fumes. You can put me out, if you want. (caressing his torso) Quit me. Leave me a butt on your ashtray. Keep my ashes in a vase. Cart me out for the relatives on holidays. Sprinkle me on the Easter turkey. I'll make a hero of you; you don't need cigarettes! (she removes the cigarette from A's titillated lips)

A: (falling on his knees before D, who's now smoking his cigarette) You're the strum of Spanish minstrels, smooth thumb-suck & burst!

B: (hugging himself, shivering) Man holds himself stiff, pretending impotence.

A: (rising from his knees) He is not sleeping. He dares not to dream. His breath comes in little filaments. He fears disease.

C: (clutching his stomach, rocking back and forth) His skirmish is entirely interior. He will die clenched down on some teething ring, bent over from exertion, wishing he had a bolder to push up a hill.

D: (chastising them, hands on hips) This is all exercise. A ruse. A pigeon's quip.

F: (sudden wail) Exit signs get in my eyes! Clocks insult me with nakedness and smoke! Tortures of unmovement! I am the lost quim of Venus!

D: (hissing at F, giving him the finger) I can't handle your vibes. Silence is the climate I aspire to.

A: (approaching D, hand on heart) I can't amend myself any further. What is the great truth of your cock-eyed haunches? Bring out my bastard and love him!

D: (pushing A away, filing her nails) I proclaim myself a feminist scholar! I will not hide amidst the masks of action.

F: (approaching D, pushing A out of the way) From across the room I sense your distance! People who cannot feel are always fugitives! You eschew the possibility of female erection!

A: (throwing F to the ground) Conversation crucifies my pure thrust! Love is my dharma-soap and she's the box!

C: (still clutching his stomach, rocking) We are a generation of matches! We cannot differentiate intelligence from confusion! We are nerves without ending! We feel safest alone!

D: (settling herself in C's lap) Bed you down on rocks of scotch and time. My groove will ride your pale manipulations of phallus!

C: (throwing D off) Reflect is the principle of jellyfish!

D: (angrily, to C) Fuck your three-wheeled baby carriage scruples! You're a mortuary puppy!

C: (slowly, deliberately) I've been rigged with chess-piece brains!

D: (approaching him again, tenderly) Share your flesh, share your heart, make me whole I'll give you part.

C: (resignedly) Sobriety obliterates my supple. There are no rosetta stones in your foam.

D: (kicking him) Bolders are blundering your mountain! Shadows are glistening your shit! Crosses are sucking up your vomit! Life cooperates with pride and abundance! Death cooperates with shy and repentance! (she begins crying)

A: (moving to console, hold her) Love cooperates with everything lovely. Don't feel soft among the steely geniuses who know what to do! You inspired my first published poem, in a dream of supernatural poise! (he wraps D in his arms)

F: (sudden frenzy) Nothing to kill or die for! No religion too!

E: (coming out of trance-sleep) Fuck that! Lennon thought peace was worth dying for, didn't he? He made Yoko into a religion, didn't he? We all heard that!

A: Well, that's love for you. Yoko was his family.

E: (to group) Do you guys believe that?

C: Vestial virgins shrimps and pillars...banana bombs...cocktails of TV static...the thin arm of ridiculous waving! Sins! Window seeds tempt me into comfort!

E: This was a tower-clock striking midnight. This was the bumble of racketing rapids. This was the prick of heroic Hercules! (he produces a copy of the bible) This existed! Ha!

C: (rising, eyes closed) Move! Anywhere! Breathe!

E: (at lip of stage, with blazing eye) Shut your eyes and listen— the thread of children's voices will hold our hearts in place, cozy as a hammer's nail, or tire tracks on blacktop roads...

END PLAY

February 1999, Arts Building, State College

The dawn broke over our bodies

for Jennifer Strawser

The room spun a wide arc, I feigned indifference, compact blue sky tightened, you sighed, I put a silent right hand on your thigh, heavens opened, venom woke, wound itself around us, the dawn broke over our bodies—

Limitless, primitive flower, first flush of power, teenage friction, skirt-chase eyelids, lipstick spasms, ingrained anger, you panted relentless, the dawn broke over our bodies—

Drunken boated, Rimbaud ice cream, I heaved, felt myself burning, bleeding, too-close breath, breasts, I felt you perfectly as an ideal forest, the dawn broke over our bodies—

The leaves died from gyrations down, into a pained place where static passion moved, was moving, we lost it, I hated you for the coming, into the coming day, slobbering dogs, crosses making Christ himself cower, absolving saints, the dawn broke over our bodies—

Our souls' music created sex for its own amusement, passing time, my sex standing for yours, bound in the breathing of stars, cutting into life deeper, space-shuttle hurtling skyward, sports car on receptive freeway, the dawn broke over our bodies—

September 1996, North Halls, State College

Clean

I gave myself an enema the other day,
 took some antibiotics.
Thought to myself,
 “This is really the poet’s
place in the world—
 not sitting in some pasture,
not smoking in some bar,
 not fucking someone lovely,
not courting Gods or Jesus.

No.

The poet’s place
 is kneeling down,
naked,
 with something
or other
 stuck
up his ass,
 in a desperate
attempt
 to get
clean.”

April 1998, North Halls, State College

Prince

Wesley wore silk pajamas—
 he looked very regal,
planted before the floor TV.

I would sit next to him,
 waiting for the ugly nurses
to feed us our pills, and take our pulses.

He told me about his car,
 his mother,
his buddies— the catalogue

of adolescent normalcy—

and you wouldn't think
 he was schizophrenic,
listening to him speak.

In fact, I thought
 he was a prince,

Albeit one who was,
 like most princes,

at the mercy of his servants.

May 1998, Paul Smyers bookstore, State College

Disappear

The bleached blonde shook
the two white bowls together,
one atop the other,
making a Caesar salad.

Another bleached blonde, my
girlfriend,
watched me watching
this meticulous process.

Dug her engine-red
nails into
the sweet secrecy
of my inner thigh,

Saying, wordlessly,
“If you think that’s
a good trick,
You should see me
disappear
sometime.”

May 1998, Shlow Library, State College

Song for Genevieve

Flip-flop her legs (so soon!) are perfect
Sunlight burnishes her kneecaps
She's a swan of smoothness
A mint to be dissolved in (strong!) tea
An oyster to be de-pearled w/ two hands

(Yawning
gape
of coagulated
sunset—

Perpetual cricket
buzz sticks
to pure ancient
leaves in breezes—)

She's poignant, pained, church-stained
Gravy-lust, the merchandise of sailors (tides!)
Orally injected (wet!) anti-depressants
You're killing me (Hepburning my body!)
Spread a flag over yr naked back, arch—
over the wall— push!— over the sky;
Stars, planets, universes yarned in a spin;
Navigate the (gated!) grave of the Milky Way;
Eat the chocolate donut of midnight—

Fall 1998, West Nittany Avenue, State College

Song for Maria

My scarlet letter let you in
We rallied on our separate beds
The way to blue was flushed with ice
Your tongue possesses everything

(lighten my,
watch my,
blow my)

In any case, the case is closed
We walk the streets, a trackless train
My verdant prayer is your own skin
I can't believe I'm free again

Relax—

Ice yr drink—

Think—

Pursue a purpose, lost in flame
Become the scum you dote on, crab
The sky, the ground, the square you are
The realm of flesh is one lone purge...

mercy mercy mercy
mercy mercy

Fall 1998, West Nittany Avenue, State College

Credits

Song for Maria was published in The Argotist Online (UK) in 2005 and re-published in P.F.S. Post in 2025.

Song for Genevieve was published in hutt (Australia) and Starfish in 2005.

Prince and Disappear appeared in Hinge Online in 2001.

Clean appeared in Siren's Silence Vol. 2 No. 3 in 1998.

Dada Circus was produced by the Outlaw Playwrights in State College, Pennsylvania, on September 24, 1998.

Mortuary Puppies was produced by the Outlaw Playwrights in State College, Pennsylvania, on February 11, 1999.

Answered Prayers and Willard Preachers, in its semi-entirety, was featured on the Art Recess 2 site in 2025.

